School Days of Our Presidents

By CARL SCHURZ LOWDEN

OF THE twenty-seven men who have occupied the nation's highest office eighteen attended college; only two of this number, James Monroe and William Henry Harrison, did not graduate. Senator Harding will be the nineteenth collegian.

The institutions of learning that hold the foremost rank as educators of Presidents are Harvard and William and Mary, as each has a score of three. John Adams and John Quincy Adams, also Theodore Roosevelt, finished at Harvard. Jefferson, Monroe and Tyler are the sons of William and Mary. Princeton has two representatives on the roll of Presidents, and Yale one.

The younger Adams sharply protested the action of Harvard when it bestowed the degree of doctor of laws upon Andrew Jackson whom cultured people regarded as an uncouth, illiterate backwoodsman. "As myself an affectionate child of our Alma Mater," he said, "I would not be present to witness her disgrace in conferring her highest honors on a barbarian who could not write a sentence of grammar and hardly could spell his own name."

Jackson was self-taught, and certainly was no scholar such as his predecessor. Caught in the sweep of the Revolution, the daring lad of thirteen years promptly "joined in" against the British. He had first attended a Carolina school kept in a log pen twenty feet square and there acquired a smattering of the three R's. He made no progress in spelling. When he became President his enemies circulated the story that he endorsed papers with the symbol, "O. K.," which he believed to be the initials of "All Correct," misspelled by him as "Oll Korrect." As there is another story of the origin of the phrase, this version must be considered doubtful.

Another sufferer in the clash between patriotism and the desire for an education was James Monroe. He went to college in 1774, left a year later, and immediately obtained a lieutenancy in the Third Virginia Regiment. Roosevelt characterized him as "a very amiable gentleman but distinctly one who comes in the category of those whose greatness is thrust upon them." What might have been said of him if the war had begun in 1779 or 1780?

School in Paris did not interest John Quincy Adams, so his father sent him to the University of Leyden, in Holland. For a time he served as private secretary to an American representative whom the Russian Government refused to receive. The boy then told his father that he thought "an American education to be best for an American career." Accordingly he returned to his native land, entered Harvard, and graduated at the age of twenty-one. The elder Adams, either precocious or probably given a smoother preparatory schooling, completed the course at Harvard when he was nineteen.

As a freshman in college Thomas Jefferson participated in festivities of a riotous sort. He soon saw, however, that such conduct would get him nowhere; so he swung to the other extreme, began to discuss philosophy and government with members of the faculty, and often spent as much as fifteen hours on his studies in a single day.

Franklin Pierce nearly let his martial ambition and enthusiasm for the study of military tactics prove his undoing. He served as an officer in a company of college students, and at the end of two years found himself at the foot of his class. The disgrace of the situation stung him. He resolved to pull himself up by his bootstraps or otherwise. He turned his attention to the subjects which he had neglected with the result that he ranked third in his class when the "sheepskins" were handed out.

The tanner's son, Ulysses S. Grant, made no flashy record at West Point. Rather he moved along with the steadiness of an old plowhorse; and, indeed, he liked to tinker with horses far better than with mathematics. At graduation he stood twenty-first among his thirty-eight classmates, but he excelled them all in horsemanship. It is true that an individual can invariably do best that which he likes most.

The schools of the pioneer days were imperfect one-room log cabins with few windows and scanty equipment. The masters were learned in Latin and Greek, and firmly believed that the sparing of the rod spoiled the child. Yet many of our Presidents received their first training in these meager institutions.

At least one of our Presidents, possibly two, never went to any kind of a school. The father of Andrew Johnson died when the lad was five years old, and his mother could not spare the money to educate him. This condition of poverty caused Andrew to be apprenticed to a tailor. He worked long hours and hard. One day a man brought a book to the shop and recited many selections that it contained. Andrew's ambition was stirred. With the man's help he learned the alphabet. But he made no real progress until his marriage. His wife read to him as she plied the needle. She helped him to learn to read and write. She was his school. Largely through her careful, patient instruction he was enabled to become the mayor of the town in which they lived.

The term "self-made" can be accurately applied to Abraham Lincoln. His total schooling consisted of only five months, two to one teacher and three to another. He did sums and practiced writing on a wood shovel which he shaved with a knife to obtain a clean surface. He often walked long distances to borrow books. One volume was ruined when rain penetrated through a chink in the log cabin, and the owner required the boy to work out its value. The lad's stepmother helped him all she could. He had an indomitable will to obtain an education, and he did. When he learned to write he penned letters for his friends; this unselfishness and practice improved his penmanship and his ability to express thought.

Washington never sought the advantages of college training. He was content with the common school where he mastered the three "R's," geometry, and surveying. During his sixteenth year he quit to become a surveyor of lands. When he was fourteen his half brother obtained a place for him in the English Navy, but his mother objected, and he did not go. Thus was he saved for his great work as a military leader and as the nation's first President.

At the University of North Carolina a young fellow named Polk proved himself correct, punctual, and industrious. He delivered the Latin salutatory because he stood first in classics and mathematics. Many years later at Kenyon College a similar honor came to young Rutherford B. Hayes as valedictorian of his class.

Polk's predecessor, John Tyler, was the ringleader in a school rebellion and mutiny when he and his mates overpowered a despotic teacher, bound him, and left him in the building until late at night when a passer-by rescued him. The scholars had evidently concluded that the man, McMurdo, was as bad as his name. He complained to Judge Tyler who dismissed him with the warning, *"Sic semper tyrannis!"* Long afterward John retold the story of the cruel principal, and commented, "It was a wonder he did not whip all the senses out of his scholars."

Another Scotchman, Donald Robertson, was the master of a school which James Madison attended. Unlike McMurdo, he did not abuse his pupils or heap injustice upon them. Madison suffered from overwork at Princeton, but when he recovered his health he took the studies of the last two years in one. After getting his degree of B. A. he remained at Princeton another year to do special work in Hebrew under Doctor Witherspoon, head of the institution. He then returned to his home, tutored his younger brothers, and began a systematic course of reading in theology and philosophy. Madison apparently was preparing himself for the ministry, but he subsequently abandoned it for law and a career of public service.

Since the administration of William McKinley the Presidents have been graduates of large colleges. Roosevelt was a Harvard man. Taft and Wilson are products of Yale and Princeton respectively. Senator Harding's Alma Mater, Union Central College, through which he earned his way by driving a team in the construction of a railway grade, has long been dead. An obscure or a dead institution is no discredit to a President, however; for a man must be potentially great before he can become great, and such a man plus a strong will is sure to make his mark with or without the assistance of a college. Washington and Lincoln are conspicuous examples of the self-taught, Roosevelt of the well-schooled.

Five of the Presidents received their education in the colleges of Virginia: Jefferson, Monroe, and Tyler at William and Mary; Buchanan at Dickinson, and William Henry Harrison at Hampden-Sidney. Massachusetts colleges educated four: the Adamses and Roosevelt at Harvard, and James A. Garfield at Williams. Ohio's list includes Rutherford B. Hayes, of Kenyon, and Benjamin Harrison, of Miami. When Senator Harding moves into the White House on or about the fourth of March, 1921, Ohio's collegiate count on the roll of Presidents will reach a total of three.

The Problem of Asthma

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a hint of the type. Often the patient himself will know of his susceptibility to poisoning by some food, to corn, or lamb, or strawberries, for instance. In others their occupation and surroundings are suggestive. Instances are cited of bakers sensitive to wheat flour, of hostlers to horse dandruff. Walker found a sifter of green coffee suffering from asthma due to protein of the green coffee husks. Two jewel polishers had asthma, the first from the dust of boxwood, the second from the dust of orangewood, employed in their daily work.

The most reliable way of demonstrating this sensitiveness, however, is by the so-called skin test. A series of cuts not deep enough to draw blood or even cause pain are made on the inner surface of the forearm and on them is placed a solution of the specific proteins to be tested, those suggested by the patient or a group of a few of the most commonly involved foods, bacteria, pollens, and animal emanations. Such a list might include egg, milk, cereals, meats, chicken and potato; the bacteria, staphylococcus, streptococcus, and pneumococcus; timothy, redtop, and ragweed; horse hair or dandruff, cat hair, and feathers. In one-half hour the reactions are noted and compared with controls on which no protein was placed. A positive reaction consists of a white wheal about the cut, in fact, a hive, which measures at least 1-5 inch in diameter.

The problem becomes more complex when the same individual is sensitive to more than one protein, to a combination of proteins from the food, bacterial, plant and animal sources, as is not uncommonly the case. Such a person will give positive reactions to all of them, especially if having been recently poisoned by them.

In past years the efforts at treatment were by necessity confined to relieving the attacks after they occurred. More fundamental measures can be taken now, to preclude the possibility of attacks. Asthmatics may either be protected from exposure to their poisons by change of environment or removal of the poison, or the individual may be so changed by treatment as to be rendered in time not susceptible to these poisons. The easiest measure with foods is to remove them from the diet. This is most successful, although sufficient cooking at high temperatures destroys the poisonous character of such foods in some cases. For instance, those sensitive to potato or milk may eat baked potato or boiled milk with impunity. Sometimes small amounts of such a food can be eaten when large amounts are poisonous. In children only careful, prolonged treatment has succeeded in rendering them non-sensitive to these specifically poisonous foods.

In the case of the animal emanations, frequently the easier treatment is to avoid exposure, to change their surroundings, or get rid of the offending animal. However in the horse, cat, and dog cases, the status of the individual can be changed—he can be desensitized by successive inoculations under the skin of increasing dilutions of the special protein. Improvement occurs quickly and can be carried to an entire lack of sensitiveness. Even the previously positive skin test becomes negative.

With plant pollens and bacteria, similar inoculations are successful. With pollens this should be accomplished before the season instead of during it. Much care is required in determining the dosage and its increase. Reactions should be avoided.

With the non-sensitive group bacterial vaccines offer the hope of relief. However, the older the patient the less hopeful the undertaking. Relief will vary with such an individual's resistance and so may not be permanent. Succeeding courses are often necessary and yet they give more prompt results the second time.

One conspicuous change in handling asthma has been dispensing with the numberless and repeated nasal operations to which asthmatics were subjected. In fact it has been said by one author that "conscientious nose and throat specialists have now learned to refrain from removing everything in their operative field for asthmatic conditions."

The changed outlook cannot be over-emphasized. Though death never occurs in an attack, yet an asthmatic never outgrows the condition or spontaneously becomes cured. Such reputed instances are generally due to the removal of the offending protein poison. With the proper treatment the outlook is excellent in the sensitive cases, and hopeful in the non-sensitive asthmatic bronchitis.

Where Christmas Takes Place of "The Fourth"

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orange hedges gleamed in the morning's light, when the Christmas guns are fired from the upper porch, the hunting horns wind joyfully, and small boys, and big boys, too, steal down into the yard to fire off the crackers that delight them. Early as it is, a regular fusillade is kept up for an hour or more, guns, pistols, horns, firecrackers and squeaking trumpets maintaining an unceasing racket.

For the older darkies there is no time like Christmas for a trip back to old "marsah's," or to see the sister or brother who lives on some distant plantation. Black daddy and black mammy look odd enough going Christmasing, tricked out in their Sunday best, with all sorts of bundles and budgets dangling here and there, and an old-fashioned carpetbag, fat to bursting, swung at the horn of the saddle. If mammy can get the loan of a buggy or wagon to go in, so much the better, but if not, she will ride a mule or even an ox, and the particular pullet she has destined for "young Mass' Henry's baby chile" will be tied on along with the other parcels and go with her.

Changed conditions in the South make it possible for the landowner to give presents only to those Negroes whose work brings them in direct contact with the family; but all who come to pay their respects on that day understand that they are to remain for dinner, and the kitchen is filled with a joyful company.

"What for does dey keep Christmas, Missie?" asks Daddie Hector, who has come out from his cabin beyond the mill ostensibly to bring a hoary old owl for inspection, but in reality to get his Christmas dram. Daddie Hector is an octogenarian at least. No one can exactly guess his age, and he is as gnarled and bent with accumulated years as one of the native live-oak stumps. A rare personage among Negroes, he refuses to attend meeting, or even have the pastor visit him.

On being told the religious meaning of the Christmas festival, he ponders on it for several seconds, then bursts out:

"Please, Marsah, den, 'cordin' dat exterpation, dis here time is worse dan Sunday."

There is a great deal of Christmas down South. The love of it and the pressing observance came directly to the people from their English forefathers, of both high and low estate, who peopled Virginia and the Carolinas in the long ago. Their descendants have spread out over the face of the country, and the old traditions and customs yet obtain in a marked degree.